



September 9, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor
State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
President pro Tempore
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for the 2021-22 State Budget Wildfire and Forest Resilience Package

Dear Governor Newsom, Pro Tem Atkins, and Speaker Rendon,

BuildStrong California (BSC) writes to express our strong support for the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Package in the 2021-22 State Budget and thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. Californians face extreme disaster risks which require robust, sustainable, and multipronged funding and policy solutions. The 2021-22 State Budget represents this much needed comprehensive approach to wildfire related disaster preparedness, mitigation, and resilience.

BuildStrong California is a diverse and inclusive coalition of professional, academic, and institutional stakeholders working to establish a state framework to prioritize and invest in resilience and ultimately save the lives and livelihoods of all Californians. BuildStrong California is committed to enhancing state, local, and tribal capacity to reduce disaster risk and protect homes, businesses, and communities in the Golden State against the next disaster. We stand ready to aid California to use its current fiscal resources as well as policy levers to build a more resilient future for itself and its nearly 40 million residents.

We are particularly emboldened by the investments into resilient forests and landscapes programs, wildfire prevention activities, funding to continue investing in wildfire fuel breaks, and for home and community hardening purposes. These wide range of investments mirror BuildStrong California's recommendations for a comprehensive approach that includes:

1. Robust and consistent state and federal investment to expand appropriate forest management and create fuel breaks;
2. Support and funding for community and home hardening with appropriate oversight to ensure meaningful mitigation before the next disaster; and
3. Investing in more resilient lifeline infrastructure and home hardening to withstand wildfires when they do occur.

While there is no catch-all solution for residential resilience against wildfires, by relying on wildfire science, building codes and standards, risk analysis and projects, we can help Californians take targeted actions to improve the strength of their homes and communities. These mitigation actions taken at the individual homeowner's level, as well as the neighborhood and community levels, will make the most impact and drive down wildfire risk and losses.

Moreover, communities across California are experiencing significant and costly damage to lifeline infrastructure resulting from wildfires. Lifeline infrastructure enables the continuous operation of critical business and government functions and is essential to human health, safety, and economic security. While home and community hardening are key preventative mitigation efforts, a critical but often over-looked element in reducing wildfire loss and hazards to residents and first responders is heat-resistant, noncombustible infrastructure.

As you know all too well, California's wildfire season is getting longer and more intense, resulting in loss of life and damage to public health, property, infrastructure, and ecosystems. As such, we commend you for the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Package in the 2021-22 State Budget and urge the state to continue this level of investment and comprehensive strategy in future years. We look forward to working with you in the coming months and years as together we can take bold steps to reduce the main drivers of catastrophic wildfires and improve the resilience of increasingly vulnerable communities.

Sincerely,

Pamela Williams

Pamela Williams
Executive Director
BuildStrong California

cc: The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
The Honorable Bob Wieckowski, Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee No. 2
The Honorable Phillip Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
The Honorable Richard Bloom, Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Hazel Miranda, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Joanne Roy, Consultant, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Susan Chan, Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee